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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

May-June 1964

No. 7

No More Unsinkable Suds? By 1965 "soft" detergents that can be broken down in sewage disposal systems, instead of foaming on downstream, should be generally available, according to a survey of industry opinion reported recently by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The "hard" detergents now in use have been linked with a number of water pollution problems. Right now natural fats and oils are the primary source of the "soft" chemical agents which decompose rapidly. The petroleum industry plans to produce them synthetically, too. The new type of petroleum-derived detergent may cost slightly more than the ones which decompose slowly.

Food Bill Depends on Your Address. The difference between the South and the Northeast is as much as \$7.50 a week for the same cart of groceries. Cost varies, too, from city to city and from store to store, U.S. Department of Agriculture food economists report. Highest food costs are in the Northeast. The West is second high, then the North Central States. South is lowest. A family with two school-age children on a moderate-cost food plan would probably spend about \$29 for a week's supply of groceries in the South. The same cartful in the North Central States would cost about \$32. Out west you'd pay about \$35. Move to the Northeastern states, and you'd pay about \$37.

FOOD FACTS

Can You Judge whether beef is prime, choice, good, or standard when it isn't graded for you by impartial USDA experts? Don't be too sure. More than 90 percent who tested their ability at the recent USDA Food and Home Fair for Consumers couldn't tell one grade from another. Many thought U.S. standard was the top quality. USDA grading offers you a reliable guide to quality and a means to compare quality with price. Regardless of season or supply, USDA grades are standard no matter where you shop. More than half of our beef supply is graded. It is a voluntary program, and processors or packers pay for this official service. Grading was one of the many USDA consumer services and safeguards reviewed at the Fair. Approximately 20,000 from 49 States attended the 15-day Fair. They requested approximately 39,000 USDA consumer publications. They showed a strong desire for more information on buying. They wanted facts about the use and care of the multitude of products available today. They also showed high interest in new products from agricultural research.



Cook the Cut Right. There's plenty of high quality beef coming onto the market right now. But unless you match up the right cooking method with the right cut, you won't get the most tenderness and flavor from the meat money you spend. Here's what USDA nutritionists recommend for USDA Choice grade beef cuts: Porterhouse, T-bone, club and rib steaks--broil, pan fry; Sirloin steaks and roasts--broil, pan fry, or roast; Rib roast--roast; Chuck, round-bone and blade roasts and steaks--roast, pot roast, or braise; Rump roast--roast or pot roast; Top round and sirloin tip steaks and roasts--braise, broil, pan fry, pot roast, or roast; Bottom round steaks and roasts--braise, pan fry, pot roast, or roast.

Trend for '64: Eat More, Dine Out More. The switch from cooking at home to eating out will pick up speed in 1964, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports. In the first quarter of 1964 sales in eating and drinking places rose 7 percent; food store sales only 3-1/2 percent. The trend to substitute costlier foods for less expensive ones will continue in 1964, too. Americans are even expected to eat a little more--especially beef, chicken, turkey, fruits and vegetables.

Remember June Dairy Month. Agriculture Secretary Freeman is urging consumers and the food industry to join in the 28th anniversary of "June is Dairy Month." He pointed out that milk and dairy products play a vital role in the health and well-being of all Americans, young and old. Too frequently, he said, young people don't get enough milk during their teens, the very years when its nutritional value is most important.

COMMUNITY

Snow Surveys Show Western Water Shortage. By surveying winter snowfall, U.S. Department of Agriculture experts and cooperating agencies can predict a community water shortage. And they've reported low water supply prospects for most western areas because of light winter snows. That will require careful water use. Outlook in the extreme Pacific Northwest is good, but light snowfall in the southern Rocky Mountain areas of Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico will seriously reduce water supplies in an area that's been short of water for the past several years.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Keeping Pests Out of your house is easier than getting them out, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists say. But they won't stay around if you eliminate food they can eat and places where they can hide. It's especially important to keep clean all likely hiding places such as crevices in cupboards, walls, floors, and behind kitchen drawers. Dispose promptly of garbage and other waste. Keep all food in tightly closed containers. Don't carry cartons in the house that might hide roaches or silverfish. Use pesticides when needed, and according to directions on the label. For new bulletin on "Controlling Household Pests--HG-96," send postcard to Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Heard of Breadfruit? Or Taro? These Hawaiian favorites are among foods included for the first time in the revised USDA Handbook, "Composition of Foods--Raw, Processed, Prepared." The handbook is the standard reference for food values used by food and nutrition workers, the medical profession, food industries, and a number of government agencies. It gives information on the composition and nutritive value of 2,483 food items. Copies are available for \$1.50 each from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Bacteria Can Transfer from one garment to another when you do your laundry. To protect your family, USDA microbiologists suggest you use a suitable disinfectant and occasionally cycle disinfectant through your washer. It's not wise, they caution, even to sort dirty clothes in the same place you'll later sort or fold your clean clothes. Recommended disinfectants are liquid chlorine bleach, pine oil, phenolic, and quaternary disinfectants. For helpful details, send postcard for "Sanitation in Home Laundering--HG-97" to Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

SMART SHOPPER

Be Size Wise when you buy eggs. It's a good way to save money. They can be extra large, large, medium, or small--yet one size in any grade is just as good as another. Size doesn't affect quality at all. And sometimes small eggs are an especially good buy--ounce for ounce. To judge quality, look for the USDA grade mark--Grade AA, or Fresh Fancy, for top quality, Grade A, or Grade B.

Pick the Plentifuls. June plentifuls are milk and dairy products; beef; canned pink salmon; and a great variety of early summer vegetables including lettuce, snap beans, cabbage, cucumbers, corn on the cob, tomatoes, and radishes. Shop the "Plentiful Foods" way, because items are usually at peak-of-quality and favorably priced.

RECREATION

National Forests Open for Visitors. National Forest camp and picnic grounds have been spruced up for the summer, and are now officially open. It's expected to be a record season as more and more Americans discover the low cost fun they offer. The ten most popular? USDA's Forest Service, which administers the National Forests lists: Black Hills in South Dakota and Wyoming; Lower Michigan; Wasatch in Utah; San Bernardino, Inyo, Angeles, and Eldorado in California; White Mountain in New Hampshire; George Washington in Virginia; and Ocala in Florida.

Take the A-Frame if you want a cabin ideally suited for hunting, fishing, or a ski retreat. Two new A-frame cabin plans developed by USDA architects and housing specialists can be built by two or three men with a little construction know-how. Plan No. 5965 is a 36-foot cabin with 1,108 square feet of floor space. Plan No. 5964 is a 24-foot cabin with 768 square feet of floor space. Each is 20 feet wide. There is a small charge for plans. Ask your County Extension Agent how to get plans.

Don't Overlook New Recreation Farms. An increasing number of farmers, under the guidance of U.S. Department of Agriculture programs, are converting their farms from crop-land to recreation land. Your family will find "down on the farm" vacations can be real fun for the money, too. You can camp in farm woodlands for as little as \$1 to \$2 a night. Or stay with a farm family. Lodging plus home-cooked meals will probably run \$30 to \$70 a week per adult. Many farms have well-stocked ponds for armchair fishing. Some have swimming pools. Children like helping with chores. For information, check with state travel offices, Chambers of Commerce, or local county agents.

John Muir "Wilderness" Established in California. 500,000 acres of National Forest land was recently designated "wilderness" and named for the noted naturalist and explorer of the High Sierra country, John Muir. The area stretches for 140 miles along the crest of the Sierra Nevada. The new classification means that no roads will be built in the area, no timber harvesting will be permitted, and development will be limited to trails and rustic campsites.

PLANTS AND GARDENS

Sanitation and Spraying are the best control for Dutch Elm disease, U.S. Department of Agriculture plant scientists say. They suggest you get rid of all infected or likely-to-be infected material just as soon as possible. Burn it, or thoroughly spray all bark surfaces with an emulsion or solution-type spray containing 8 pounds of DDT in each 100 gallons. If you use a solution, the solvent should be No. 2 fuel oil. If your trees become infected in the spring or early summer, they usually will die quickly. Trees that become diseased in late summer are much less seriously affected. They may even recover. Single copies of "The Dutch Elm Disease and Its Control--193" are available for 35 cents each from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Pink or Blue Up to You. Most flowers are pretty set in their ways. But not the hydrangea. They're usually pink, but you can color 'em blue. Just drench soil thoroughly two or three times with a solution of 1 pound of aluminum sulfate in 5 gallons of water, U.S. Department of Agriculture plant specialists suggest. Then fertilize lightly. Prefer pink? A high phosphate fertilizer, such as 15-30-15, in the water will keep 'em that way.

Soaking Spells Success. A canvas soaker hose is the best way to water flower beds because it lets water seep directly into the soil without waste. And the slow-moving water doesn't disturb the soil, U.S. Department of Agriculture plant scientists report. Least effective way to water is for you to stand out there with a hose. The water wets the flowers and foliage, and for some plants this is an invitation to disease. And gardeners are seldom patient enough to do a thorough job.

Spray Poison Ivy Now. June and July are the best months to spray areas you think might be infested with poison ivy, USDA plant scientists report. Plants take several weeks to die and normally two or more applications are necessary to control sprouting poison ivy. Even then, keep a careful watch over the area. Plants you think are dead sometimes revive after many months. New seedlings may become established. Spraying after August 15 is less effective because plants begin to go dormant then.

HOUSING

Wise Way With a Mortgage. A desirable contract provides for house payments as large as you can afford at the present time, with the right to repay the loan at a faster rate than you originally agreed to do. USDA family economists point out not all contracts have this feature. Mortgages guaranteed by the Veterans Administration must include this provision, and without penalty. The larger the down payment you can muster and the quicker you pay the mortgage loan, the less it will cost you in the long run.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer, rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write Editor, SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.